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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [KDEM](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: INTER-PARTY POLITICS LEAVES WOMEN BY THE WAYSIDE  
IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS

REF: A. RABAT 0517  
[1](#)B. RABAT 0607  
[1](#)C. RABAT 0858  
[1](#)D. RABAT 0877

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Unlike the June communal elections in which, through the aid of a 12 percent quota, women won an unprecedented number of regional and city council seats, female candidates fared poorly in the successive rounds of indirect voting, including for parliament,s upper house election in October. Political parties refused to support women candidates as they had in the communal elections, instead turning to horse trading and maneuvering to gain strategic positions. Some female politicians attributed this lack of support to resentment over what their male colleagues believed to be an unfair advantage during the earlier elections. Interparty rivalries and the fatigue of the women's movement following the local council elections also played a role. The failure of parties to support more women illustrates that, despite ongoing reforms, women still have a long way to go to advance their participation in Morocco,s political processes. The Mission will continue to support the newly elected women, through MEPI-funded leadership and management training, in order to ensure that those women who were elected have the tools they need to succeed. End Summary.

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Limited Gains for Women  
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[1](#)2. (U) In contrast to the communal (local council) elections in June, in which 12 percent of seats were reserved for women and a dozen women were elected to head local councils as mayors or mayor-equivalents, female candidates fared poorly in the successive rounds of indirect elections, for which there were no quotas. Women gained only three additional seats in the indirect upper house election in October, bringing the total number of women in that chamber to six (two percent). The government has not yet released information on the number of women elected indirectly to regional, provincial or national positions, but anecdotal information suggests that the numbers will not remotely represent the same kind of advances seen in the communal contests.

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Women Politicians Exasperated  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Many female politicians had hoped that the large influx of elected women in local councils would pave the way for greater representation in the upper house. Council members serve as "electors" in all subsequent rounds of

indirect balloting -- including for the upper house -- and many had expected that the influx of 12 percent of women into those councils would translate into additional seats at higher levels. However, this was not the case. Khadija Rouissi, Chief of the Ethics Committee for the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), called the upper house election "catastrophic" for female politicians. She and other politicians and activists unanimously blamed the political parties for failing to support their own female candidates. During the local elections, for example, 20 percent of the PAM candidates were women. In contrast, during the election to the upper house, few parties supported women candidates for leadership positions.

¶4. (SBU) Despite the fact that, according to the GOM, the newly elected women hold a higher average level of education than their male counterparts, the political parties did only "the bare minimum" in terms of providing support during the successive elections, USPF activist Fatima El Maghnaoui observed. Anissa Naqrachi, a human rights activist and cousin of PAM founder Fouad Ali El Himma, said that the refusal of the parties to help their own female candidates indicated a backlash from many male party stalwarts. "There was a lot of resistance" to further advancements by women, she said. Naqrachi opined that some male politicians viewed the quota for female candidates in the June communal elections as an unfair advantage, even though the poor showing of female candidates in the successive elections had clearly demonstrated the need.

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Interparty Jostling Triumphs over Ideology  
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¶5. (SBU) Other observers who were heavily involved in the communal elections explained that the parties returned to politics as usual once the stakes were higher and there was no longer a quota to fill. In other words, parties were more focused on gaining strategic seats in regional councils and the upper house than standing for principle (see reftels). In the face of PAM's rising political prowess, most parties sought to maintain their influence in elected bodies. Another contributing factor may have been that the women's movement had exhausted all of its resources on the communal elections and had been disappointed when the number of women elected barely surpassed the 12 percent quota as they had anticipated.

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Comment  
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¶6. (SBU) The introduction of quotas for women in the communal elections and other reforms have dramatically increased women's participation in electoral politics in Morocco. However, the poor showing of women in subsequent rounds of indirect balloting illustrates that they still have a long way to go. Much resistance remains to female leadership, both within the political parties and among the society at large. The Mission will continue to support the newly elected women, through Middle East Partnership Initiative- (MEPI-)funded leadership and management training, in order to ensure that those women who were elected are able to better develop the tools they need to expand their political participation. End Comment.

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JACKSON